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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3878
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RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: PKK ATTACK KILLS 12

11. (SBU) A September 29 attack on a minibus in southeastern Turkey resulted in the deaths of 12 Turkish citizens. Two more were injured. GOT officials believe the attack was carried out by PKK terrorists. According to press reports, the bus was returning from a worksite in the Altinsu District of Sirnak Province, near Turkey's border with Iraq, to the villagers' home in Besagac in the Beytussebap District of Sirnak. The passengers were reportedly working on a water pipeline project and were on their way home in the early evening when, according to survivors, the bus in which they were riding came under heavy automatic weapons fire from both sides of the road. Among those killed were five temporary village guards, two volunteer village guards, and five civilians.

GOT OFFICIALS FIERCE IN REACTION

12. (SBU) President Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan both issued statements condemning the attack. Gul said, "No person or power can hurt the unity and indivisible integrity of our country. I want to stress that those who resort to terrorism and shed blood and tears and slay our citizens without pity will be eradicated in the face of the strong will of our nation and state." He added that such attacks would only serve to increase the determination of the Turkish state in the fight against terrorism. Erdogan similarly said the GOT's fight against terrorism will continue, adding that the attack was one of the PKK's "last convulsions." Sirnak Governor Selahattin Apari's remarks to over 2500 at the September 30 funeral rang a familiar refrain implicating U.S. involvement when he said, "...we know very well whose weapons the terrorists are using."

KURDISH POLITICIANS NOT QUITE THERE

13. (SBU) The pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) issued a statement deploring the attack. The DTP release included criticism of the government's continued offensive operations against the PKK throughout the southeast. DTP co-chairs Nurettin Demirtas and Selma Irmak conveyed their condolences to the relatives of those who were killed in

condemning the attack. At the same time, they questioned the immediate assumption that the PKK was responsible for the shootings and urged GOT officials to investigate the incident to shed light on the perpetrators. The DTP statement also urged restraint by Turkish security forces and the opening of political channels between the GOT and Kurdish representatives, including the DTP.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: This attack is the worst in terms of casualties since the May bombing in Ankara, and the worst single shooting incident this year. Although the pressure on the GOT to green light a cross-border operation has diminished somewhat in recent weeks, these attacks underscore the continued threat the PKK poses, particularly in Turkey's southeast. The correlation between such attacks and reports of PKK use of U.S.-origin weapons also continues to be made with regularity by GOT officials, complicating our ongoing efforts to reinvigorate the bilateral relationship.

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